

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 CU-04 DRC-01 /094 W

----- 126470

R 220217Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4466

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL PINT KS US

SUBJECT: RETURN OF GREGORY HENDERSON COLLECTION

REF: SEOUL 3952

1.DR. LEE SUN-KUN, PRESIDENT OF KOREAN CULTURAL PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION ON JUNE 19 DELIVERED IDENTICAL LETTERS IN KOREAN ON HENDERSON CASE ADDRESSED TO AMBASSADOR AND SECSTATE (REFTEL). ENCLOSED WAS A FORMAL RESOLUTION BY ASSOCIATION AND LIST OF 143 CULTURAL ARTICLES ALLEDGEDLY IN HENDERSON'S POSSESSION. FULL TESTS FOLLOW BY POUCH.

2. LETTERS DESCRIBE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF ASSOCIATION AND ITS CAMPAIGN TO RETRIEVE UNLAWFULLY REMOVED CULTURAL PROPERTY, STATING LATTER "CANNOT BE EFFECTIVE WITHOUT YOUR COOPERATION AND THEREFORE ON BEHALF OF THE ENTIRE ASSOCIATION I ASK YOUR SPECIAL COOPERATION FOR RETURN OF FOLLOWING LISTED CULTURAL PROPERTY."

3. LETTERS CHARGE HENDERSON WITH REMOVING MANY VALUABLE CULTURAL ITEMS UNLAWFULLY FROM KOREA, EXPRESS DISPLEASURE AT THE "UNLAWFUL" DEED, AND SAY IT "UNTHINKABLE" FOR DIPLOMAT WHOSE FUNCTION WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO PROMOTE FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN US

AND ROK TO HAVE REMOVED THE ITEMS IN QUESTION.
LETTERS CLOSE WITH EXPRESSION OF "HOPE FOR YOUR
POSITIVE COOPERATION AND SUPPORT" AND REFER TO
ENCLOSED RESOLUTION AND LIST OF ITEMS.

4. RESOLUTION CONTAINS TWO MAIN POINTS:

-- PLEDGE TO REGAIN UNLAWFULLY REMOVED PROPERTY.

-- DENUNCIATION FO HENDERSON FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE
OF STATUS AS A DIPLOMAT BY UNLAWFULLY REMOVING 143
ITEMS OF CULTURAL PROPERTY FROM THE COUNTRY IN 1962.

5. AS REPORTED REFTEL, WHEN ACCEPTING LETTERS DCM
MADE CLEAR EMBASSY WAS NOT AGREEING TO UNDERTAKE
ANY ACTION IN CASE. WHILE LETTERS MAKE NO SPECIFIC
REQUEST, THEY DO REQUEST "SPECIAL COOPERATION" FOR
RETURN OF LISTED ITEMS. IT DEPARTMENT CONCURS,
WE PROPOSE EMBASSY MAKE BRIEF WRITTEN REPLY TO
BOTH LETTERS MAKING FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- SINCE HENDERSON IS A PRIVATE CITIZEN IT
IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE US GOVERNMENT TO BECOME
INVOLVED IN THE CASE.

-- THE ASSOCIATION MIGHT CONSIDER TAKING UP
THE MATTER WITH MR. HENDERSON EITHER DIRECTLY OR
THROUGH THE ROK EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON.

6. IT INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT WHILE PRESS EARLIER
IN WEEK GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO HENDERSON CASE,
JUNE 21 PAPERS CONTAINED VIRTUALLY NO COVERAGE.
THIS SUDDEN SHIFT OCCURRED AFTER SEOUL
SHINMUN ALONE CARRIED UPI ITEM QUOTING HENDERSON
AS OFFERING TO DONATE ITEMS OF HISTORICAL VALUE
TO NATIONAL MUSEUM IF ASSOCIATION COULD PROPERLY
IDENTIFY THOSE WHICH FALL INTO THAT CATEGORY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CULTURAL PROPERTY, POLICIES, PRESS COMMENTS, CULTURAL ATTACHES, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS, DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CollinP0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SEOUL04025
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740164-1052
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740622/aaaaasby.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SEOUL 3952
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06-Aug-2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <19 FEB 2003 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RETURN OF GREGORY HENDERSON COLLECTION
TAGS: SCUL, PINT, KS, US, (HENDERSON, GREGORY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005